

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BONN 02053 021628Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00
CIAE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5454
INFO SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE
DIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE
USMISSION USNATO IMMEDIATE
USNMR SHAPE IMMEDIATE
CINC USAREUR HEIDELBERG
CINC USAFE RAMSTEIN
CINC EUR VAIHINGEN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY ROME

C O N F I D E N T I A L BONN 02053

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MILI, MPOL, GW, US
SUBJECT: GEORG LEBER - EARLY DEPARTURE REMAINS LIKELY

REF: BONN 1939 DTG 011521 FEB 78

BEGIN SUMMARY: ALTHOUGH LEBER'S RESIGNATION OF FEB. 1
REMAINS UNACCEPTED, THE CONTROVERSY SURROUNDING MANAGE-
MENT OF THE DEFENSE MINISTRY CONTINUES TO THICKEN AND
LEBER'S DEPARTURE REMAINS LIKELY SOONER RATHER THAN
LATER, PERHAPS WITHIN DAYS. END SUMMARY.

1. CHANCELLOR SCHMIDT'S PLAN TO HAVE A MEETING FEB. 2
OF ALL PARTY LEADERS PLUS LEBER TO REVIEW THE CONTRO-
VERSIAL ACTIVITIES OF THE DEFENSE MINISTRY'S COUNTER-
INTELLIGENCE BRANCH (MILITAERISCHE ABSCHIRMDIENST, OR
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M.A.D.) DID NOT MATERIALIZE. THE OPPOSITION REFUSED
TO ATTEND, SAYING THIS WAS A MEETING BROUGHT ON BY A
POLITICAL CRISIS AFFECTING THE GOVERNMENT RATHER THAN A
NATIONAL EMERGENCY AS IN THE CASE OF THE SCHLEYER
KIDNAPPING. INSTEAD, SCHMIDT HAS BEEN MEETING FEB. 2
WITH THE POLITICAL LEADERSHIP OF THE COALITION, APPAR-
ENTLY ON LEBER AND RELATED MATTERS. NO INFORMATION IS

YET AVAILABLE ON THIS DISCUSSION.

2. MEANWHILE, WORD HAS BEGUN TO SURFACE THAT WHAT LEBER LEARNED ON JANUARY 31, AND THE STATED REASON FOR HIS FEB. 1 RESIGNATION OFFER, INVOLVES FURTHER QUESTIONABLE M.A.D. ACTIVITIES. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, SOME 16 ADDITIONAL CASES OF QUESTIONABLE OR ILLEGAL BUGGING BY THE M.A.D. HAVE TAKEN PLACE SINCE 1968 IN ADDITION TO THE "SECRETARY BUGGING CASE" WHICH SURFACED IN LATE JANUARY. A NUMBER OF THE CASES SEEM TO INVOLVE INTERNAL SURVEILLANCE WITHIN THE DEFENSE MINISTRY; ONE REPORTEDLY FOCUSSED ON A RADICAL BRANCH OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY (COMMUNIST LEAGUE OF WEST GERMANY, OR KBW).

3. SPECULATION IN BONN CONTINUES THAT LEBER WILL LEAVE SOON, AND THE MOST-MENTIONED POSSIBLE SUCCESSORS ARE FINANCE MINISTER APEL AND JUSTICE MINISTER VOGEL; OTHERS MENTIONED ARE BREMEN MAYOR AND SPD DEPUTY CHAIRMAN KOSCHNICK, AND DEFENSE STATE SECRETARY VON BUELOW.

4. COMMENT: WE BELIEVE THAT SCHMIDT'S REFUSAL IMMEDIATELY TO ACCEPT LEBER'S RESIGNATION IS NOT A SIGN THAT LEBER WILL STAY. RATHER, IT MAY REFLECT A PREFERENCE ON THE PART OF THE CHANCELLOR AND CABINET TO LET LEBER LEAVE WITH MORE DIGNITY (I.E., ON A SECOND REQUEST), AND/OR TO GAIN MORE TIME TO PICK A SUCCESSOR
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AND PUT A NEW CABINET IN ORDER. THE FACT THAT TWO OTHER MINISTERS (EDUCATION AND SCIENCE--ROHDE, AND HOUSING CONSTRUCTION--RAVENS) WILL LEAVE SOON MAKES A SIGNIFICANT CABINET CHANGE INEVITABLE.

5. WE ALSO NOTE THAT THERE MAY BE MORE POLITICAL SURPRISES IN THE DAYS AHEAD. THE ALLEGED TIME SPAN OF THE M.A.D. BUGGINGS--1968 ON--COULD INVOLVE THE DEFENSE STEWARDSHIPS OF HELMUT SCHMIDT (1969-1972) AND GERHARD SCHROEDER (CDU; 1966-1969). MORE DISTANT REVELATIONS, IF THEY COME, COULD AFFECT OTHER PREDECESSORS--VON HASSEL, STRAUSS, OR THE LATE THEODOR BLANK, ALL CDU.
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